

THE UNSTOPPABLE SPIRIT Part 6: The Mission Expands

Note: This plan follows the content of Pastor Derek's podcast, "Acts Daily Devotional." You can also find this plan on YouVersion. Find more information at www.whoisgrace.com/acts

PART 6/ WEEK 18 ARRESTED IN JERUSALEM

DAY 120 SEIZED IN THE TEMPLE

Scripture: Acts 21:27-32

Reflect: The Jerusalem elders had asked Paul to join four men who were finishing a Nazirite vow and pay their expenses. Paul agreed and stepped into the temple to begin the seven-day purification rite. It was a costly, humble, peace-making move. He had no idea that everything was about to detonate.

Six days into this peace plan and Paul is being beaten to death on the temple steps. The trouble comes from Jews from the province of Asia. Ephesus territory. They spot him in Jerusalem, far from his Roman-citizenship privileges and his Gentile bodyguards.

They claim Paul has been teaching against three things every devout Jew held sacred: our people, our law, this place. Then they add the bombshell. He brought a Greek into the temple.

Their accusation was a lie, but the whole city believed it anyway. The same crowd that came to celebrate God's faithfulness was suddenly trying to kill the man God had sent to extend His mercy to the nations.

And then comes the providential rescue. Up the steps of the Antonia Fortress, a Roman tribune named Claudius Lysias was on duty. He saw the chaos, grabbed two centurions and a couple hundred men, and came thundering down the steps. The mob saw the soldiers and the beating stopped.

Jesus told Paul years earlier that he would carry the gospel to kings, governors, and Caesar himself. The road to Rome is starting right here, on the wrong end of a beating. Paul is bloodied, handcuffed, and hoisted on the shoulders of the soldiers who've just saved his life. God is going to work through another disaster. The thing that feels like the end of your usefulness could be the unexpected beginning of a new chapter.

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's REFLECTION: Paul made a choice to walk into the temple in obedience, and obedience ran him straight into a mob. Most of us assume that when God is leading us, the path will feel safe and easy. Sit with this question today. Where in your life right now do you feel like obedience has put you in a harder spot, not an easier one? A relationship that got more strained because you spoke truth. A job that grew tighter because you held a line. A conviction that's costing you friends. Faithfulness sometimes feels like falling. Paying the price might not mean that you missed God's voice. It may be the clearest sign that you heard Him.

Pause to Pray: *Lord Jesus, help me to be obedient and faithful even when situations are not comfortable and things are not going as smoothly as I hoped. Amen*

DAY 121 PERMISSION TO SPEAK

Scripture: Acts 21:33-40

Reflect: Yesterday closed with Roman boots thundering down the steps just as the mob was beating Paul to death. Asian Jews from Ephesus had accused him of allowing a Gentile to enter the temple. The crowd intended to finish him off on the spot. Then the soldiers came, and the beating stopped.

The commander, Claudius Lysias, has him chained between two soldiers and starts asking questions. Who is this man? What did he do? The crowd answers him, but everyone's screaming a different thing. So, Lysias gives up trying to sort it out and orders Paul carried up into the fortress.

Halfway up the fortress steps, Paul turns to the commander and asks a question in flawless, educated Greek. "Am I allowed to say something to you?" Three things just happened in that one sentence. Paul kept his composure after a beating. He spoke a language the tribune didn't expect. And he did it with the courtesy of a diplomat, not the rage of a victim.

With his face still bloody and his arms still chained, Paul asks for a microphone. "Let me speak to the people." Lysias agrees. Paul raises his hand, and the crowd goes still.

What Paul models here is something the church needs to recover. We tend to confuse courage with confrontation. Paul shows us that genuine boldness is patient, articulate, and disarming. He didn't shout louder than the mob. He spoke smaller, and the crowd got quiet on their own. Sometimes the most courageous thing the Spirit gives you is the self-control not to escalate.

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's CHALLENGE: Paul stayed composed under attack and used his words with surgical precision. Most of us, when we feel cornered, do the opposite. We get loud, we get defensive, or we shut down completely. Pick a conversation that's on the horizon where you might tend to react badly. A coworker who pushes your buttons. A family member who knows exactly which thread to pull. A topic in small group that gets you all worked up. Before you respond, pause and ask yourself one question: what would the Spirit have me actually say here? Then say only that. The goal isn't to win the exchange. The goal is to leave the other person more open to truth, not less.

Pause to Pray: *Father, I confess that I tend to react badly when...Help me to learn self control. Help me to find ways to be an influence even in heated situations. Amen*

DAY 122 PAUL'S DEFENSE: MY CONVERSION

Scripture: Acts 22:1-11

Reflect: Paul has the floor. The mob is quiet for the first time all day. Whatever he says next will either save him or get him killed. He doesn't argue the false charges. He doesn't quote Roman law. He doesn't appeal for sympathy. He tells them his story.

He gives the credentials this specific crowd respects most. Born a Jew. Raised in Jerusalem. Trained at the feet of Gamaliel, the most respected rabbi of the era. Then comes the hammer: I persecuted this Way to the death. The Way is capitalized here meaning he's talking about the church. He's telling this Jewish crowd, you think I'm your enemy, but I used to be your most violent ally.

Then he tells them what changed. He was on a road, saw a noon-day light brighter than the sun, and a voice called him by name. Jesus said, "Why are you persecuting me?"

There's something beautiful about Paul's choice to lead with his testimony. He had every reason to defend himself with logic, evidence, and legal status. He chose vulnerability instead. He told the crowd, in essence, I used to be exactly where you are right now. I was sure I was defending God. I was wrong, and Jesus was the one who showed me.

Most of us underestimate our story because it doesn't feel dramatic enough. But the fact that Jesus is alive and at work in any normal person's life is just as miraculous as what happened on the Damascus road. The light that hit Paul still hits people.

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's TAKEAWAY: You have a testimony. Not the inflated version. The real one. The places God has actually shown up. The fears He's quieted. The pattern He's broken. The grace that found you on whatever road you were on. A lot of people have never said their testimony out loud. So today, pull out your phone, open the voice memo app, and just talk for two minutes. No script. No audience but you. Put words to what Jesus has done. The difference he has made in your real life. Don't be a stranger to your own story. Put words to it and be ready to share.

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, thank you for rescuing me. You have given me a story. Help to be ready to share my story. Amen*

DAY 123 PAUL'S DEFENSE: MY COMMISSION

Scripture: Acts 22:12-21

Reflect: Paul keeps telling his story. He says a man named Ananias came. A devout man according to the law. This wasn't some renegade sect peeling Saul away from his heritage. It was a respected Jewish believer welcoming him into the fulfillment of the promise of his people.

Then Ananias delivers a specific, scripturally weighted commission. *The God of our ancestors has appointed you.* There's something powerful happening here. Paul didn't get his marching orders directly from Jesus on the Damascus road. He got the broad strokes. The clarity came through Ananias. An ordinary disciple, a faithful believer who said yes when God asked him to walk into a dangerous house. A lot of people are waiting for a Damascus Road moment. Lightning bolts. And a booming voice. And crystal clarity. Meanwhile, God keeps sending us our own version of Ananias. The friend who texts at the right moment. The mentor who notices something in you that you couldn't see yourself. God almost never does His most important work in your life without using somebody else's humble obedience. That cuts the other way too. Maybe right now, somebody in your orbit needs you to be their Ananias. They don't need a vision from God. They need you to show up and be God's presence. To call them brother. To pray a sentence over them they'll remember for the rest of their lives.

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's REFLECTION: Think back over the last decade of your spiritual life. Who was your Ananias? Whose hands has God used to bring sight back to your eyes when you couldn't see? Most of us have a few of those folks. You should probably send them a thank-you message today. It doesn't have to be

long. Just tell them what they did for you and that you remember. Naming the people God has used to shape you trains your soul to keep watching for them. May pray your heart will be filled with gratitude for those who have been a faithful source of blessing to you over the years.

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, thank you for putting _____ in my life. Help me to be the same kind of person for others. Amen*

DAY 124 PAUL CLAIMS CITIZENSHIP

Scripture: Acts 22:22-29

Reflect: The crowd had been listening respectfully. Paul had gone deep into his testimony, naming Jewish leaders, quoting Jewish prophets, telling them about a vision he had in their own temple. Then he named the Gentiles as fellow recipients of God's love. And the courtyard exploded.

They couldn't stomach the idea that God was sending Paul to bring Gentiles into his kingdom without first making them convert to Judaism. So, they tore at their clothes, threw dust in the air, and screamed for his death.

The Roman tribune was watching all of this but he couldn't understand Aramaic so he was piecing it together. He can see it's going south, so he orders Paul taken into the barracks for the flagellum, the most brutal interrogation tool in the Roman arsenal. Lysias is going to use it to find out what Paul actually said that made the crowd want him dead.

The soldiers stretch Paul out. The lash is in the centurion's hand. And in that moment, Paul asks one question that stops the entire procedure cold. "Is it legal for you to scourge a man who is a Roman citizen without a trial?"

Roman law strictly prohibited torturing a citizen without trial. This whole scene raises an interesting question. Why didn't Paul declare his citizenship sooner? He could have shut the riot down on the temple steps. He could have prevented the chains.

Paul knew something we tend to forget. There's a difference between rights you possess and rights you use. The fact that you can defend yourself doesn't always mean you should. Up to this point, the suffering was serving the gospel. The beating in the temple gave him a platform. Every step of degradation became another chance to lift up the name of Jesus.

There are situations in your life this week where you could push back, file the complaint, seek retribution, demand the apology. Sometimes you should. But sometimes restraint is faithfulness, too. Spiritual maturity is the difference between knowing you have a sword and knowing when to draw it.

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's REFLECTION: Pick one ongoing tension in your life where you've been mentally building a case. Today, ask yourself one question. *If I never get the apology, the recognition, or the win in this situation, can I still be okay?* Most of us spend a lot of time rehearsing arguments some of which we'll never get to deliver. Not every right is worth defending. Some are worth handing back to God. What is the Spirit asking you to set down today?

Pause to Pray: *Father, I yield myself to you. Please use me for your glory. Please use me so that others will know Jesus and follow Him. Amen*

DAY 125 BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

Scripture: Acts 22:30-23:5

Reflect: Lysias still had no idea what Paul had actually done to start a riot. So he tried a different tactic. He convened the Jewish ruling council and made them sort it out themselves. Paul gets only a few words into his defense before the high priest tries to shut him up.

His opening is pretty strong, *Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience to this day.* That word "brothers" is what set Ananias off. When Paul greeted this man as "brother," it was an offense to his ego. So, he ordered Paul punched in the face.

Paul reacts. Not with the patience of Christ before Pilate. *"God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall."*

Then somebody whispers in Paul's ear. *Do you realize you just cursed the high priest?* And Paul stops cold.

What he says next is very underrated. *"I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest. For it is written, you must not speak evil of a ruler of your people."* He doesn't double down. He doesn't justify himself. He doesn't argue that Ananias deserved it. He quotes the very Scripture he just violated and submits to it.

It seems small but this is really big. The mark of maturity isn't that you never slip. It's how fast you submit when you do. The friend who corrected him didn't even need to argue. He just named the standard, and Paul came back into line. That kind of humility in the heat of the moment is what godliness actually looks like in real time. Most of us spend hours stewing and building cases to justify our reactions.

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's CHALLENGE: Think of the last time someone close to you pointed out that you were wrong. Maybe just a small correction. How long did it take you to concede the point? An hour? A day? Are you still defending yourself in your head five years later? Today, find one of those people and finish the conversation. Send a short message. *You were right. I was defensive. Thanks for sticking with me.* Submission to honest accountability gets faster the more often you practice it.

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, help me to see when I'm not in the right. Give me the humility to admit it and seek forgiveness. Amen*

DAY 126 DIVISION AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Scripture: Acts 23:6-11

Reflect: Paul looks around the council and sees the room divided. Pharisees on one side. Sadducees on the other side. Two factions that disagreed on almost everything, especially on whether the dead rise. So Paul makes a calculated move. He shouts, *I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees! I am being judged because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead!*

The room explodes. The two parties turn on each other, the trial dissolves into a shouting match, and the tribune has to send soldiers in for a third time to drag Paul out before he gets torn limb from limb. The Bible doesn't airbrush its heroes. This lends a great deal to its historical credibility. Paul has a flash of brilliance and a lapse of patience in the same breath.

By nightfall, Paul is back in the barracks. Alone. Bruised. The dream of converting Jerusalem is gone. The verses don't say what he was thinking. We can imagine. *Did I miss it? Did I move too soon? Was Jerusalem a mistake?*

Then, in the dark of the next night, Jesus shows up. *"The Lord stood by him and said, 'Have courage.'"* Jesus didn't show up to revisit any of Paul's somewhat questionable decisions. He stood beside him in the dark and offered the very thing Paul needed. *Take courage. You testified to me in Jerusalem. You will testify to me in Rome.*

Most of us have some middle-of-the-night discouragement in us. A decision we second-guess. The relationship we couldn't save. The ministry season that ended with more questions than fruit. We replay it. We're sure Jesus must be disappointed.

But, the Jesus who showed up in Paul's barracks didn't critique past performance. And He also stands beside you in the dark and points to what's next. The tone of grace isn't "let me list everything you got wrong." The tone of grace is "have courage, there's still more story being written."

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's TAKEAWAY: Sometimes the most important thing God says to you isn't a correction. It's a companionship. Pull out a piece of paper or your notes app and finish this sentence. *The midnight chapter I keep replaying is...* Just name it. Then write underneath. *Jesus is standing beside me. He is pointing forward and giving me courage.* Read those lines out loud. Sit in his presence. Receive his love and encouragement. Some of you need to stop auditioning for a grace you've already been given.

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, the midnight chapter I keep playing in my head is ... Thank you for forgiving me. Thank you for giving me the grace to move forward. Amen*

PART 6/ WEEK 19 PLOTS AND TRANSFERS

DAY 127 THE PLOT UNCOVERED

Scripture: Acts 23:12-22

Reflect: Forty men sat in a room, swearing to murder a preacher. Paul sat in a barracks with a promise from Jesus, waiting to see what the next day would bring. And Luke drops an unsung hero into the story. He doesn't have a name. He's just "the son of Paul's sister."

Watch the domino effect of God's providence. Forty men make an oath. A nephew overhears it. Paul is told. A centurion listens. A commander believes. And a plot that had every advantage of secrecy, manpower, and religious cover is dead in the water before it starts.

Providence isn't always God flexing his greatness through spiritual fireworks. Sometimes it's much less dramatic.

Most of us are not Paul the apostle. We are more like the nephew, overhearing a conversation, wondering if it matters. It does. 'Faithful' follows just behind 'available.'

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's CHALLENGE: Somebody in your life is sitting in a barracks today, knowing something is wrong but unable to see what's coming. You may already know something they need. A warning. A scripture. A confession. An apology. Something you've been carrying that belongs in their hands. Today, deliver the

message you've been sitting on. Don't workshop it. Don't perfect it. The nephew didn't draft a careful letter. He walked into the barracks and said the thing. Be that person before the day ends.

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, Thank you for including unlikely heroes in your plans. Help me to be alert and responsive today, especially as I.... Amen*

DAY 128 TRANSFERRED TO CAESAREA

Scripture: Acts 23:23-35

Reflect: Picture it; the most disciplined fighting force in the ancient world mobilized at night to protect a man the empire had no reason to care about. This is God's providence.

Claudius Lysias's letter to Governor Felix is a blend of truth and self-promotion yet God uses every word. Lysias writes; "There was no charge that deserved death or imprisonment." That single sentence becomes Paul's legal foundation.

A teenager overheard a plot. A tribune took it seriously. A self-promoting officer wrote a sentence that would protect Paul through three trials. None of these people thought they were on a mission. They were just doing what came next.

If God can run a Roman convoy at midnight, He can handle whatever is coming at you. The God who moved an empire to protect one preacher is the same God moving in the corners of your life that feel forgotten.

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's TAKEAWAY: There are people working for your good right now who don't even know it. A coworker. A neighbor. A bureaucrat. A stranger. God's providence is wider than the people who believe in it, and He is not waiting on anyone's permission to move on your behalf. That promotion you didn't get. The relationship that fell apart. The door that closed. None of it caught God off guard. He has cavalry you can't see, riding out all around you in ways you'll never know about, getting you where He promised you'd go.

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, Thank you for always working on my behalf. Help me to trust you more in... Amen*

DAY 129 CHARGES BROUGHT BY TERTULLUS

Scripture: Acts 24:1-9

Reflect: The chief priest asked a corrupt pagan governor to do what God's law would not allow him to do. The charges were carefully built as accusations a Roman governor would care about. Tertullus translated a theological dispute into political language because he knew Felix wouldn't lift a finger over some Jewish doctrinal argument.

Those charges were nearly identical to the ones Luke records against Jesus before Pilate. Luke is showing a pattern; The gospel makes its way, even through hostile courts.

Paul stands silently. He doesn't interrupt. He waits. Paul knew he wasn't really on trial. The gospel was. And the gospel always wins, even when the verdict is delayed.

The early church didn't grow because Christians won all their cases. It grew because Christians kept telling the truth in rooms designed to silence it. That's still the assignment.

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's REFLECTION: Where in your life is the gospel getting reframed as something it was never meant to be? A faith translated into politics by people who don't share it. A conviction recast as bigotry. A worldview labeled extremism. The temptation is to fight the framing and clear your name in the comment section. Paul shows us a different posture. The truth has overcome unfair settings for two thousand years. What would change in the way you carry your faith if you trusted that the gospel doesn't need you to win every argument, only to keep telling the truth?

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, Grant me wisdom to discern your truth and speak the gospel clearly as you lead. Amen*

DAY 130 PAUL'S DEFENSE BEFORE FELIX

Scripture: Acts 24:10-21

Reflect: After he's dismantled the charges, Paul confesses he follows the Way. He worships the same God as his accusers and waits for the same resurrection they profess. The difference is that he believes the resurrection has already started in Jesus of Nazareth.

He declares, "I always strive to have a clear conscience toward God and men." This does not happen by accident. He trains for it. He notices, confesses, repairs, and keeps short accounts. Every day. Paul stands calmly before Felix because he's been doing the work of conscience all along.

Paul links his clear conscience to his belief in resurrection. There's going to be a final accounting. Both the righteous and the unrighteous will rise. Therefore, he disciplines his conscience now. Future reality shapes present integrity.

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's TAKEAWAY: Most of us think we'll find courage when the moment requires it. Paul shows us courage is built in the quiet. He didn't summon his calm for the courtroom; he carried it in. The clear conscience he relied on in front of Felix had been trained in a thousand obscure moments of confession and repair long before a Roman governor ever called his name. Hardship doesn't form character, it reveals it. Which means you will not be brave under pressure if you have not been preparing in private. Pick the unfinished business with God you've been avoiding. Name it today and face it head-on. Your integrity depends on it.

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, Today I confess... Please forgive me. Grant me courage and discipline to change... Amen.*

DAY 131 FELIX DELAYS

Scripture: Acts 24:22-27

Reflect: Felix knew the gospel wasn't a threat and Paul didn't deserve prison. The honest verdict was in front of him, not guilty. He just couldn't bring himself to deliver it.

He sends for Paul to hear him "speak about faith in Christ Jesus." The Holy Spirit was convicting hearts through Paul's preaching, and the Roman governor felt it in his bones.

What does Felix say? "Leave for now, but when I find time, I'll call for you." Felix doesn't refuse Christ outright. He simply asks Christ to wait.

After two years, Felix is recalled to Rome. The convenient season he kept waiting for never arrived. It never does. Felix is a cautionary tale, not because he rejected the gospel outright, but because he kept saying I'll get to it later.

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's CHALLENGE: If you are tuned in to God's voice, there is probably something the Spirit of God has been pressing on you recently. I would venture to guess you know exactly what it is. A confession. A decision. A change. A surrender. You haven't said no. You've just said *not yet*. This idea of a convenient season is a fiction. It never arrives because it was never real. Felix had two years of access to the apostle Paul and used them to wait for a moment that never came. Today, do the thing you have been postponing. Make the call. Have the conversation. Stop the behavior. Start the obedience. Whatever it is, do it before the sun goes down. Don't be like Felix.

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, Thank you for your patience and mercy. Help me move forward with...today. Amen.*

DAY 132 APPEAL TO CAESAR

Scripture: Acts 25:1-12

Reflect: Festus asks Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and be tried before me there on these charges?"

In response Paul declares, I am a Roman citizen. I appeal to Caesar. Once a Roman citizen invoked Caesar in a capital case, the trial was automatically transferred out of the local governor's hands and to the emperor himself. Festus could not refuse it.

Two years earlier, Jesus had said, "You will testify in Rome." That promise had driven Paul's decisions ever since. And he'd run out of options.

Paul did not pray for deliverance and wait for angels. He used the tools already in his hand. The God who promises to deliver you also expects you to know what He has placed at your disposal. Festus renders the only verdict left to him. "You have appealed to Caesar; to Caesar you will go." Paul's road to Rome has now opened.

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's REFLECTION: Where are you waiting for God to deliver you from something He has already given you the means to walk through? A boundary you have the authority to set but haven't. A truth you possess, but you keep not saying it. What tool has God already placed in your hand that you keep

praying He would replace with a miracle? Paul's appeal to Caesar was using his wisdom to solve a problem. Sometimes obedience to God looks like deploying what He has already placed within your grasp.

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, Thank you for providing all that I need. Grant me wisdom and courage to... Amen.*

DAY 133 FESTUS CONSULTS AGRIPPA

Scripture: Acts 25:13-22

Reflect: Before sending Paul to Rome, Festus needed to draft a legal brief explaining the charges. He had no idea what to write. When King Agrippa and his sister Bernice showed up on a courtesy call, Festus saw an opportunity. Agrippa was widely respected as an authority on Jewish religion. If anyone could help Festus untangle this mess, it was him.

Festus tells Agrippa, the whole controversy comes down to "a certain Jesus, a dead man Paul claimed to be alive." He accidentally preaches the gospel in eleven words.

Christianity stands or falls on that single historical claim. The man crucified outside Jerusalem walked out of His tomb three days later and is alive right now. Every other Christian conviction depends on whether that one sentence is true.

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's TAKEAWAY: A confused Roman governor accidentally summarized Christianity better than most sermons ever will. A dead man Paul claimed to be alive. That is what your faith is about. The whole structure of the Christian life rests on a grave that was empty on a Sunday morning two thousand years ago. If that sentence is true, everything else in your life has to bend around it. If it isn't, none of the rest matters. So today, ask yourself the question Festus didn't bother to ask. Is He alive or isn't He? Because if he is, that's the most important truth in the whole world and you should probably re-arrange your life around the answer.

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, I believe you are alive! Continue to show me how to build my life on that truth. Amen.*

PART 6/ WEEK 20 BEFORE AGRIPPA AND VOYAGE

DAY 134 BROUGHT BEFORE AGRIPPA

Scripture: Acts 25:23-27

Reflect: There is something almost comic about the irony. The whole pageant had been thrown together because Festus needed Paul to give him something to write. The prosecutor had nothing to say. The judge had nothing to write. The defendant had everything to declare. The loudest voice in that auditorium belonged to the man in chains. Years before, Jesus had told Ananias that Paul was a chosen instrument to carry his name "before Gentiles, kings, and the sons of Israel." Caesarea now contained all three. Paul would later write from another prison that his chains "have actually served to advance the gospel."

We tend to imagine our influence will arrive when we have the right title, platform, or level of credibility. Paul shows up in chains and still preaches. Outward credentials do not produce kingdom influence. The Spirit does.

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's TAKEAWAY: God is not waiting on your title to start using your testimony. Paul preached the gospel from inside chains because he understood that influence in the kingdom does not flow from credentials. It flows from surrender. The room you walk into today does not need your résumé. It needs a person who actually believes what they say they believe. Stop waiting for the platform you think you need. Open your mouth where you already are. The Spirit has placed you in this room on purpose.

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, Help me to be a faithful witness today, in the rooms you have placed me. Amen.*

DAY 135 PAUL'S DEFENSE: PERSECUTOR

Scripture: Acts 26:1-11

Reflect: Paul is on trial for "the hope in what God promised to our ancestors." That promise is the messianic hope of Israel, that God would send a deliverer, defeat death, and gather his people into a kingdom that would not end.

The Jews accusing Paul share this hope. The only difference is whether it has already begun in Jesus.

Then Paul names his past cruelty in detail. This is not a sanitized testimony; he's giving all the gory details.

Paul is making a theological point, not just a personal one. If the Jewish hope of resurrection is true, and if Jesus is its fulfillment, then God is in the business of raising the dead. Paul's own life is evidence that the gospel is what he says it is.

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's CHALLENGE: Most of us have a chapter we keep tucked behind the polished version of our story. A season of cruelty, addiction, hypocrisy, drift. Today, name it out loud to one safe person. Not for shock value. For testimony. Tell someone the part of your story you usually skip and tell them what Jesus did with it. The point is not confession for its own sake. The point is that grace gets louder when the before is told honestly. Pick the person. Send the text. Schedule the coffee. Your worst chapter, surrendered, becomes someone else's hope.

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, I am so grateful that you redeem every season of my life. Help me to surrender _____ to your purposes today. Amen.*

DAY 136 PAUL'S DEFENSE: THE DAMASCUS ROAD

Scripture: Acts 26:12-18

Reflect: Paul didn't just wake up one morning and decide to follow Jesus. The Spirit had been working on him through every contradiction he could not explain. The grace that finally knocked him down had been pursuing him for a long time.

There is something almost shocking about this commission. The Gentile-hating Pharisee is being sent to the Gentiles. Grace didn't just forgive Paul. It reversed the trajectory of his whole life.

Jesus does not just save a person *from* something. He saves them *to* something. Every Christian is rescued from the dominion of darkness so they can carry light into someone else's darkness. Specific callings differ. The pattern does not. If grace has reached you, it has also redirected you.

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's REFLECTION: Paul's commission was not a new vocation tacked onto an old life. It was the redirection of everything he already was. His passion, his training, his relentless drive, all of it got pointed in a new direction. So, here's the question to sit with. What part of your life have you treated as separate from your calling, when grace was redirecting it, not retiring it? Your job, your past, your wiring, your wounds. What if Jesus did not save you in spite of those things, but in order to send you back into them with new eyes?

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, Thank you for redirecting me according to your good plans. Help me to wholeheartedly follow your lead, even in the area of... Amen.*

DAY 137 PAUL'S DEFENSE: OBEDIENT TO THE VISION

Scripture: Acts 26:19-32

Reflect: Paul gives Agrippa a one-sentence biography. "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." That sentence is a defense, a confession, and his entire ministry compressed into 8 words. Three decades of hardship traced backward to a single moment of obedience he never stopped honoring. That is Christian discipleship. We are not called to a series of inspired moments. We are called to the long obedience that comes after the excitement of the initial moment fades. Many people receive a vision of some kind from God. A conviction. A calling. A piece of clarity in a season of prayer. The hard part is not that moment. The hard part is the next thirty years of not turning away from what was made plain.

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's TAKEAWAY: Most of us do not need a new vision. We need to stop leaking the one we already have. Paul summed up thirty years of a faithful life with a single sentence. Could you? The Christian life is not measured by how clearly you saw God once. It is measured by how faithfully you have followed what you saw. Pull up into your mind a conviction God gave you in a clearer season. The promise. The salvation. The calling. The thing you knew you were supposed to do and have been slowly forgetting. Today is the day to stop drifting from it.

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, Forgive me for losing focus on... Help me to reclaim your vision for me and follow through with... Amen.*

DAY 138 SAILING BEGINS

Scripture: Acts 27:1-12

Reflect: The voyage moves slowly. They finally limp into a small bay on the south side of Crete. Every sailor on board knew the safe sailing season was closing.

A council is called. A better harbor is just forty miles up the coast.

Then Paul speaks. "Men, I can see this voyage is headed toward disaster and heavy loss, not only of the cargo and the ship but also of our lives."

The centurion overrules him. Fair Havens really is exposed. Phoenix is better protected. The decision is reasonable, yet wrong.

The wind shifted. The weather looked perfect. They felt confirmed. But this gentle south wind was the very breeze that would carry them straight into the storm of their lives.

We tend to read momentary favorable circumstances as automatic spiritual confirmation. A favorable wind is not the same as a faithful direction. Paul was right because he had heard from God when all they had heard was the weather report.

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's CHALLENGE: Identify one decision in front of you right now where the wind feels favorable. Money is lining up. Doors are opening. Someone influential is excited about it. Before you set sail, circle back and ask God to confirm the direction. Invite him to push back. Close the door. Speak clearly in a way you can understand. His wisdom is far better than any gentle wind, blowing you right into a disaster.

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, I submit to you my decision about.... Please confirm your perfect will in this. Amen.*

DAY 139 THE STORM

Scripture: Acts 27:13-26

Reflect: "You men should have followed my advice not to sail from Crete." Paul needs them to listen this time. "Last night an angel of the God I belong to and serve stood by me."

The angel's message - Don't be afraid. It is necessary for you to appear before Caesar. God has given you everyone sailing with you.

Paul had received a word from God he could stand on. Everyone else had their hope tied to circumstance. When the circumstances disappeared, the hope went out the window. Paul's hope was tied to a word, and the word didn't blow away with the wind.

The men on the boat had been throwing things overboard for days. Paul stands up in the middle of all that loss and gives them the one thing they hadn't been able to throw away. A word from God they could anchor to.

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's REFLECTION: Paul could say "I believe God" because he had received a word from God he was choosing to trust. Most of us find we don't have a word to stand on when the storm hits. We have

feelings. We have opinions. We have preferences. What word from God are you currently anchored to, and could you say it out loud right now? If nothing comes to mind, you have some storm preparation worth doing today. Time to memorize a promise from God before the wind starts kicking up.

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, I am choosing to trust you today about... Thank you for being my safe shelter. Amen.*

DAY 140 SHIPWRECK

Scripture: Acts 27:27-44

Reflect: After drifting for weeks, the sailors sense land. The closest they've been to deliverance is also the most dangerous moment of the trip. A ship moving sideways in a hurricane near jagged rocks is a ship about to be torn apart.

Then Paul takes bread, gives thanks to God, and begins to eat. Paul gave them a reason to hope and a reminder that God was still in the boat.

Every one of those men heard Paul pray. Every one of them watched a believer's faith hold steady when the professionals had given up.

Then the ship runs aground.

The chapter's end is anti-climactic. "In this way, everyone safely reached the shore." The promise God had spoken in a dark cabin on a flooding ship came true on a beach at dawn.

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's TAKEAWAY: Paul didn't end the storm. He worshipped through it. He took bread, gave thanks out loud, and broke it in front of 276 desperate men. One believer's visible faith in the middle of a wreck can do more good than a dozen sermons in a sanctuary. Whatever your storm is right now, somebody is watching to see whether God is real to you, even when he hasn't yet rescued you. Don't wait for the calm to start worshipping. Take the bread now and demonstrate your faith out loud.

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, I worship you in the middle of this storm...Help me stay focused on you as I await your deliverance. Amen.*

PART 6/ WEEK 21 FINAL DAY

DAY 141 MALTA, ROME, AND UNSTOPPABLE WITNESS

Scripture: Acts 28:1-31

Reflect: The story closes the way it unfolded. Humbly. Faithfully. Through ordinary people doing ordinary things while the Spirit does extraordinary work behind the scenes.

Paul wades ashore on Malta and immediately starts gathering firewood. That's a good metaphor for the whole story of Acts. Big mission. Small obedience. Dirty hands.

When he finally arrives in Rome, Paul finds the gospel had beaten him there. It had been riding on the wings of business. Merchants. Tradesmen. Travelers. Slaves and freedmen. Ordinary believers faithfully told their neighbors about Jesus.

This was how God designed it. None of the original twelve apostles were professional clergy. And nearly all the miracles recorded in the book of Acts happened outside the walls of religious gathering. The gospel spread because faithful believers carried it everywhere they went.

It still moves the same way.

What might a step of ORDINARY OBEDIENCE look like today?

Today's CHALLENGE: Acts ends with an open door, the spirit still active, and the mission still advancing. That's because you and I are the next chapter. We're Acts 29. So, here's the challenge as we close this series. Write your Acts 29. On one page, answer this question; Where is the unstoppable Spirit moving you? Maybe there is a person in your world that needs to hear about the goodness of Jesus from you. Maybe there's a step of obedience the Spirit is asking you to take this week. Write it down. The mission doesn't end with Paul. It extends through you. Take the baton and run your leg of the race.

Friend, we've walked twenty-eight chapters together, and what a gift it has been to open this book with you. Keep showing up to the Word every day. The Spirit who carried Paul from Jerusalem to Rome is the same Spirit who meets you on every page from the creation in Genesis through the last "Amen" of Revelation. The book of Acts closes. But our mission doesn't.

Until Jesus returns or we meet again, may your witness be bold, may your faith be unshaken, and may the unstoppable Spirit have free reign in your life. Glory be to God.

Pause to Pray: *Jesus, I come to you today willing and available to follow your lead... Amen.*

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